



Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center - Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Executive Director

“The concert hall of the 21st century has arrived. But in addition, the huge building, laid out on a hillside, houses a 400-seat theater with comparable versatility; two black-box studios, one geared more toward sound, the other toward sight; and space for rehearsals and other uses. And for their electronic and data needs, all these components have access to one of the world’s biggest supercomputers.”

The New York Times (10/08/2008)

Organization

Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center

At the Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Institute), the arts, sciences, and technology meet under one roof in four exceptional venues. This incredible 220,000 square foot building, designed by London-based Grimshaw Architects, opened in 2008 and is an unmatched model of acoustics, infrastructure, and architectural engineering with state-of-the-art performing arts infrastructure and architectural engineering. EMPAC’s concert hall features 1,165 seats with the ability to sculpt the acoustical soundscape for musical performances and equipment for screens, projections, and staging elements. The Goodman Studio/Theater and Studio 2 are versatile spaces that can be used to create immersive experiences utilizing both projection and sound technology. EMPAC’s theater features computer-controlled rigging, a sixty-foot fly tower, and advanced recording audio and video recording technology. Beyond the four core venues, EMPAC houses residency studios, research offices, green room, soloists/conductor suites, changing rooms, and the main lobby level, as well as café and mezzanine levels, which are often used by students as studying and meeting spaces.



EMPAC currently commissions, presents, and researches interdisciplinary time-based visual art and the entire range of performing arts genres. It is on the precipice of its next era as a local, regional, and global research entity and destination in exploring the industry and market in which the EMPAC business model exists and how it will evolve. EMPAC will embrace how its purpose deeply aligns with the Institute’s Rensselaer Forward strategic plan in its 2024 Bicentennial and over the next 10 years with strategic themes embedded in Education, Research, Translation, Regional Engagement, and Welcoming & Inclusive Community. The Institute’s strategic goals include becoming the premier arts and creativity-driven science and engineering university; creating a robust and holistic learning community focused on the generation and discovery of new knowledge, processes, and products at the interface of science, technology,

and arts; and leading a renewal of and integration with the Capital Region.

Artists-in-residence work with EMPAC’s technological resources in order to produce work at the center, often planned years in advance. Artist residencies are uniquely tailored to each individual artist, and members of the EMPAC production staff are deeply involved in the development of artistic ideas of the residencies. The unique polyvocal curatorial programs at EMPAC lead to the creation of diverse time-based artworks and hundreds of artists have created and presented their new works that foster deep artistic inquiry and audience engagement. The artistic projects are supported in depth over extended periods of time, allowing the artists to fully realize their visions using the exceptional technological infrastructure and the expertise of the EMPAC staff. Artists in residence share their artistic research through the process, and visitors can also engage in experiences ranging from theater productions, concerts, and installations to an interdisciplinary program of screening, talks, and workshops. Collaboration with other institutions, presenters, and museums is key to EMPAC’s goal of expanding audiences and connecting more deeply to the on-campus and external communities it serves.

EMPAC is the center of robust research initiatives driven by Institute students, faculty, and staff from all five schools. In addition to its curatorial program, the research program at EMPAC sustains an annual calendar of meetings, workshops, and symposia. Institute researchers have access to the venues and support of EMPAC'S professional experts for their work centered on questions of understanding human sensory experience, communication, and interaction with computing systems. The Institute offers a range of ways for its students to be involved at EMPAC, from student work to research and performance opportunities, extracurricular clubs, and special events. Using the venues and with the support of EMPAC'S professional experts, researchers are supported in work centered on the questions of understanding human sensory experience, communication, and interaction with computing systems. From student work to research and performance opportunities, extracurricular clubs to special events, EMPAC offers a range of ways for Institute students to be involved. Since 2020, EMPAC has also been part of the Google Arts & Culture project, allowing visitors to enjoy stories on various topics, including the building's design and construction and spatial audio and wave field synthesis. While EMPAC is independent of any individual school of study, it plays a critical role in centering the Institute in the international discourse around arts, science, and technology.



EMPAC's core annual operating budget in fiscal 2024 is \$4.6 million with additional expenses embedded in the Institute's operational structure, and it has approximately 40 full-time staff. The current direct reports to the EMPAC Executive Director include Associate Director (Arts), Associate Director (Research), Director (Stage Technologies), Lead Audio Engineer, Senior Business Administrator, Senior Systems Administrator, Manager (Communications & Grants), Manager (Design Communications), and Manager (Administrative Operations).

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

The Institute was founded in 1824 by Stephen Van Rensselaer and Amos Eaton. Eaton, its senior professor, was a pioneer of American scientific research and education. It was one of the first educational institutions in the United States specifically dedicated to the study of science and civil engineering, and today it offers more than 140 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs across five schools that include the School of Architecture; School of Engineering; School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences; Lally School of Management; and School of Science. The Institute has 8,922 students, 483 faculty, and 1,188 staff, and Martin A. Schmidt, PhD, began his tenure as the nineteenth President of the Institute in July 2022. It has 23 NCAA athletic teams, more than 50 club sports, and 200 student-led clubs with more than 80 percent of its students taking part in intramurals, club sports, or intercollegiate programs. Sixty percent of undergraduate students live on campus, and many students participate in the performing arts, including the Institute Players, Orchestra / Ensemble / Concert Choir, Rensselyrics, and Pep Band.



Community

Troy, New York, is on the east bank of the Hudson River and is part of the Albany-Troy-Schenectady Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which also includes Saratoga Springs. The MSA consists of approximately one million people with demographics that are 77% White, 7% Black, 6% Hispanic, 5% two or more races, 4% Asian, and 1% other races with 9% speaking a language other than English at home. The median age of the MSA is 40.7, with 62% in the 18 to 64 range, 37% earning more than \$100,000 annually, and 41% having a bachelor's degree or higher. The Combined Statistical Area (CSA) is almost 1.2 million people, with similar demographics to the MSA,

and runs south to Saugerties and the Southwestern Massachusetts border, north beyond Warrensburg, west beyond Johnstown, and east along the western borders of Vermont and Massachusetts.

Troy is located on the traditional and unceded lands of the Mohican, Schaghticoke, Haudenosaunee, and Mohawk peoples. The Institute acknowledges and honors these native lands and those who originally called the general area Paapack. Known for its rich history, the Troy of today offers the convenience and accessibility of urban living, but with a friendly small-town feel.

Sources: datausa.io; censusreporter.org; census.gov; worldpopulationreview.com; neighborhoodscout.com; u-s-history.com/pages/h2231.html; troyny.gov; esd.ny.gov

Position Summary

The Executive Director of EMPAC will guide and deliver on its mission and vision as a global center at the intersection of the arts, science, and technology. They will be accountable for a strategic direction, business model, and adaptive change that are in alignment with the Institute's *Rensselaer Forward* plan, including the goal to create the most welcoming and inclusive community possible for faculty, staff, students, and the external community EMPAC serves. The Executive Director will maintain a presence both on and off campus by actively participating in the community and establishing international visibility at relevant conferences and other events that increase exposure and access to artists that could be curated, produced, or presented by EMPAC. These activities are focused on preserving an integrated interdisciplinary pedagogical approach to research, programs, and campus events that inspire active participation at EMPAC, including attendance, by faculty and students. The Executive Director will partner with each of the School Deans and Institute Administration to coordinate student learning outcomes, activating EMPAC as a hub for student learning on campus. They will oversee, inspire, and collaborate with a dedicated staff while investing in them and securing the resources that ensure EMPAC remains at the forefront of technological advancements. In collaboration with Institute Advancement and the President, the Executive Director will establish and maintain a portfolio of donor relationships that support the capital and operating needs of EMPAC, including its facilities, programs, and research. Additionally, the Executive Director will spearhead plans with the Office of Community Engagement and Communications to engage with local and regional organizations, as well as to raise the unique profiles of both EMPAC and the Institute in the region and on national and international levels.

Roles and Responsibilities

Strategic Vision and Program Dynamism

- Re-imagine EMPAC's mission for its next phase of development in alignment with Rensselaer Forward.
- Develop and design EMPAC's strategic plan building on its curatorial reputation and strengthening the integration of research, presenting, producing, and community accessibility.
- Build creative and authentic relationships and strategic partnerships with other academic institutions, national and international fine and performing arts centers, and creative industry professionals who are at the forefront of experimental media.
- Leverage EMPAC's incredible facilities, particularly the concert hall, for greater program creativity, flexibility, and participation while recognizing the competitive regional market in which it exists.
- Effectively communicate and organize resources in collaboration with Institute leaders, faculty, and EMPAC staff to achieve the desired academic and administrative outcomes.
- Advance and monitor the quality and quantity of artistic and intellectual programs of presented events, visual media curation, student and external productions, and artist residencies (both individual and group) with clear attention to earned and contributed revenue targets.
- Generate and integrate interdisciplinary research initiatives specific to EMPAC, partnering effectively with the School Deans, research centers, Institute faculty, and students to fully utilize experimental media infrastructure and research capabilities.
- Evaluate and revitalize new media, arts, technology, and research to ensure that EMPAC reflects the Institute's focus as an international research leader and innovator.
- Embrace other strategic vision and program dynamism responsibilities, as needed.

Campus and Community Engagement

- Create an interactive process that focuses on responsiveness and adaptation to students, faculty, and community needs in the rapidly evolving world in which EMPAC exists.

- Develop effective EMPAC accessibility programs and operational avenues that ensure that it is seen as a warm, welcoming, and receptive to the core campus community, audiences, and visiting artists.
- Understand, manage, and evolve EMPAC's multi-venue utilization capacity in conjunction with EMPAC staff in service to the five schools of the Institute and the external community.
- Design and oversee the implementation of a communications plan with the Institute's Office of Community Engagement and Communications team to raise the visibility of the unique brand and impacts of EMPAC.
- Serve as the primary spokesperson for EMPAC internally and externally while mobilizing the President's office, Institute Advancement, Deans, and others, as appropriate.
- Maintain and expand a network of professional practitioners, artists, and researchers locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally with an eye to advancing the intersection of the arts, media, science, engineering, and technology.
- Initiate, integrate, and invigorate the arts across every academic and research area of the Institute and demonstrate its impact with alumni and beyond.
- Build clear channels of communication to and dialogue with the varied groups of internal constituents and the external community.
- Embrace other campus and community engagement responsibilities, as needed.

Team Leadership, Financial Resiliency, and Operational Adaptation

- Select, mentor, and manage staff in hiring, evaluation, professional development, and other human resource functions that are focused on deeply embedded teamwork and the effective implementation of EMPAC and Institute initiatives, goals, and objectives.
- Evaluate and improve staffing structures, systems, and processes, including the design of an environment in which workloads are well balanced and diverse individuals are recruited, valued, and appreciated.
- Focus on the visibility and marketability of various curatorial and presented programs, revenues generated from external participation by audiences attending EMPAC events, and philanthropic support that ensures EMPAC's vibrancy.
- Coordinate with the Office of Institute Advancement in identifying, cultivating, and engaging donors, host capital campaign related special events, and secure funds that support EMPAC's capitalization and operational needs.
- Identify and seek out grants from government sources and foundations in close collaboration with the Office of Institute Advancement and the Office for Research.
- Create and present overall budgets that reflect EMPAC's needs with fiscal responsibility around all expenditures and initiating cost containment when necessary.
- Oversee the generation of project, production, and technical budgets with appropriate allocation of resources that balance staff capacity with achievable program implementation goals.
- Embrace other team leadership, financial resiliency, and operational adaptation responsibilities, as needed.

Traits and Characteristics

The Executive Director will be a gifted collaborator and communicator who builds relationships and partnerships both on campus, as an ambassador in the community, and at the forefront of the experimental media and performing arts fields. An entrepreneurial thinker with creative artistic spirit and a drive for innovation, the Executive Director will see the big picture, invite ideation from many sources, lead adaptive change, and have a futuristic vision. They will bring EMPAC and the Institute together around a shared strategy and vibrant business model with an open minded, creative, calm, and diplomatic approach. The Executive Director will have a wide network among innovative and experimental artists and will mobilize technology in artistic experimentation. They will inspire trust by being human-centered, responsive, thoughtful, and strategic. With the cultural competency to meaningfully engage and include diverse audiences and individuals, the Executive Director will support existing successful programming, partnerships, curation, and research while welcoming new ideas that propel EMPAC to new heights.

Other key competencies include:

- **Leadership and Personal Accountability** – The authenticity to influence and inspire others to believe and participate in an impactful vision while holding oneself answerable for personal and professional actions.

- **Creativity and Innovation** – The capacity to invigorate new approaches, systems, processes, concepts, and ideas while also analyzing hypothetical concepts and formulating connections that result in new insights and opportunities.
- **Diplomacy and Time & Priority Management** – The ability to analyze all aspects of a situation and listen to many points of view to make consistently sound decisions and facilitate agreements with and between multiple individuals and stakeholder groups with emotional intelligence.
- **Planning, Organizing, and Project Management** – The dexterity to define and diagnose key aspects of a challenge and then establish a rigorous course of action to achieve the desired, multifaceted project and stakeholder engagement outcomes.

Qualifications

The successful candidate will have a minimum of a master's degree, or equivalent experience, and 8-10 years of senior management expertise in commissioning, promoting, programming, producing, and/or presenting contemporary music, theater, dance, multi-media, or other experimental creative industry initiatives. A comprehensive understanding of associated production, capacity utilization (both venue and staff), audience development, and venue management is important. Although experience in an academic environment is helpful, those with demonstrable results in nonprofit or corporate structures are welcome to pursue this unique opportunity. Exceptional relationship management, donor cultivation, and creative industries expertise with leading producers and artists at the national and international level is preferred. The capacity to work flexible hours on evenings and weekends is required in best serving the needs of numerous stakeholders.

Compensation and Benefits

The Institute provides a competitive and equitable compensation package estimated to be in the range of \$250,000 to \$300,000. Pay transparency disclosure: The selected candidate's salary will be determined based on factors that include the available budget, internal equity, and the final candidate's qualifications, experience, education, and other job-related credentials. This hiring range is provided as Rensselaer's good faith estimate of the expected hiring range at the time of posting. Benefits include paid time off and holidays; health insurance (medical, dental, vision, and prescription drugs); long-term disability and life insurances; and defined contribution retirement plan. The Institute's Total Compensation Program is designed to provide stable pay growth, a comprehensive and affordable benefits package, and a comprehensive and affordable retiree medical and prescription plan. A more detailed overview of employee benefits can be found [here](#).

Applications and Inquiries

As part of an inclusive process, interested applicants are invited to inquire and/or submit a cover letter that balances artistic philosophy with an understanding of the importance of academic research; a resume that highlights a chronological career progression, education, and associated accomplishments; and a production-oriented curriculum vitae that demonstrates how the applicant's past experience has made a meaningful contribution to contemporary arts, higher education, and/or society. To submit materials (electronic submissions preferred), please click [here](#) or visit artsconsulting.com/opensearches. For questions or general inquiries about this unique opportunity, please contact:

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Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. The Institute welcomes candidates who will bring a broad spectrum of cultural, ethnic, national, and international perspectives to its work and campus communities. The Institute encourages all to apply, as diversity across race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, age,

military status, disability status, marital or domestic partnership status, parental status, and all other identities is vital to its progress as an organization.